

Lesson: Isaiah 63:16b,17 & 64:1-8

^{63:16b} you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. ¹⁷ Why, O LORD, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance.... ^{64:1} Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! ² As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! ³ For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. ⁴ Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. ⁵ You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? ⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. ⁷ No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. ⁸ Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. – NIV84

Prayer of the Day:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come Lord Jesus. Alleluia. (Revelation 22:20 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Are you tired of waiting yet? I am! This pandemic has caused a mess of just about everything. It's been over a year since the first reported cases in China began popping up and even the mention of the word Covid just kinda sets my nerves on edge as I wonder what's coming next. But then that's not what I'm talking about. Maybe, maybe then it's the political climate right? What a circus that has become. Is the election certified or not? Do we have a president for next year or not? Was there tampering or not? Why is this so hard to figure out? But then that's not what I'm talking about either. Maybe by now you're getting tired of waiting for me to say what I'm tired of waiting for. It would seem that we are doing a lot of waiting these days. Anticipation builds for just about anything and everything as we anxiously wait to see when life will return to normal, when fear can be replaced with the quiet ebb and flow of our everyday life once again, when parties and gatherings won't be scrutinized and analyzed for their danger of spreading some unseen virus to those in attendance. Waiting is hard!

Advent is a season of anticipation, a season of waiting. And that wait is always twofold. Sure, we wait for the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas or better put the celebration of the first coming of Jesus at Christmas. But Advent also ties into the themes of End Times as we watch and wait for the second coming of our Savior in glory to judge the living and the dead. It's that second coming which I so yearn for. As the world slowly seems to crumble into the abyss of sin and the

consequences that come with it, I find myself more and more sounding like Isaiah in our Old Testament Lesson today, **O LORD, REND THE HEAVENS AND COME DOWN! COME DOWN FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR NAME! COME DOWN FOR SAKE OF YOUR PEOPLE!**

Why, O Lord? That's the big question Isaiah blurts out at the beginning of our lesson. *Why, O LORD, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?* It's really part of a plea that God would return in grace upon His people. It's a grace Isaiah knows they need.

Israel has by in large descended into the madness of unbelief. God's people had turned their backs on Him and so He has been trying to wake them from their spiritual slumber. In the first half of Isaiah (1-39), it's Assyria that threatens the very existence of God's people, but are sent packing by an angel of God after surrounding the very walls of Jerusalem. In the second half of Isaiah (40-66), it's Babylon's rising to power which will swallow God's people whole and carry them off into captivity but throughout the book, we get glimpses of a greater enemy and a greater redemption for the people of God, not just Israel but all who by faith are heirs of the promise of Abraham.

Isaiah sees the real problem in our lesson, even as He pleads for God's mercy. ⁵ *You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?* ⁶ *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.* ⁷ *No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.*

Isaiah brings us face to face with the realities of God's holy law. God has always promised that when we are just, when we are holy, then we are blessed. It's led to more than one person thinking they can program success then. If I can keep all the laws get others to keep them too, then God will surely have to bless us! Then success will return! Sound at all familiar? It should.

¹*Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!* ² *As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!* ³ *For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.* ⁴ *Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.*

GO GET 'EM GOD!! If only you would flex that almighty muscle and show your might to the world, then everything would once again fall into place here on earth. I'm tired of waiting ... fix it! Make them bow, make them acknowledge the truth, make them tremble for their sin and turn to You!

Dear friends, that day will come. God will reveal His power and might and every knee will bow before the rightful ruler of all creation. But as God's name is once more held high, and His power is clearly seen, notice what it does to Isaiah. "Those" and "them" disappear from his speech. Confronted with perfection, sin sticks out like a sore thumb, and "we" and "us" are clearly heard listen again. ⁵ *You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?* ⁶ *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.* ⁷ *No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.*

It is certainly true that our world has chosen to walk away from God in many and in some pretty gross and horrific ways. But if we are honest with ourselves, as Isaiah is with himself, we will quickly see the world which clings to us and is influenced by us often has a similar effect upon

us. I would be so bold as to say that with God things are usually a matter of clear distinctions: yes or no, good or bad but we like to pretend that things are less clear and usually found on a spectrum. Surely it is bad to Murder but hatred can easily be justified depending on a person's beliefs and if they are in agreement with mine or not. Surely prostitution is sinful but living together before marriage, acting like we are married when we are not well it's all okay as long as my intent is to eventually make an honest woman or man of them, right? (wrong). God condemn the government that would tell me to stay away from grandma at Thanksgiving or Christmas but time with my heavenly Father in His word well maybe that can be forgone for the sake of safety and because online worship just isn't the same, I'll forgo it all together. You get the idea. Before the law *we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

So Isaiah relies not on his action or his standing, good or bad, before God. Our first and last verses say it all. *you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name... Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.* Father You, know best come not in anger but in mercy. Use the wildness of our world to shape us into a people who would trust You more, rely on You more, remember Your work more.

Brothers and sisters, when we do, when the Holy Spirit works His gift of faith within us, we see the Redeemer. The Savior God who rent the heavens and came down in flesh to save His people not in might but in humility. He lived our lives for us and in our place that we might lay claim to the perfection He procured for us all. He allowed Himself to face the cross and all the shame and pain of that joke of justice that His death might mean life for us. His resurrection the proof of the pudding promising that we are God's people and heirs of the promises as forgiven children given freedom in this life to live for God given freedom from sin to live with Him forever.

Are you tired of waiting yet? I am! My heart yearns for the perfection God has instore for me. I can't wait to see you all in the perfection Jesus has won for us. But then God knows what He's doing, even if I have a hard time seeing it sometimes. So life here mimics the season in which we now stand. Waiting, watching, hoping! **O LORD, REND THE HEAVENS AND COME DOWN! COME DOWN FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR NAME! COME DOWN FOR SAKE OF YOUR PEOPLE!** Dear friends, he has in the person of our Savior Jesus who has already won the fight. He does as he regularly strengthens us in word and sacrament. He will when He finally returns to take us all to be with Him in glory. Amen!